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October 4, 2001

Ms. Carol Hanlon
US Department of Energy: Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
(M/S #025)
PO Box 30307
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89036-0307

Dear Ms. Hanlon,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns about the transportation of high level radioactive waste across the United States to Yucca Mountain, Nevada. My understanding is that these shipments would come from 118 commercial nuclear power reactors, from 10 nuclear weapons facilities, the Navy and 37 research reactors located around the country. They would be traveling through forty-seven states, and would be in motion through St. Louis, where I live, on the average of every other day for the next 25 or 30 years. I live about a mile from Interstate 44, and less than that from the Missouri Pacific railroad lines upon which this highly radioactive waste is likely to be transported.

I have many concerns. One of my concerns is about transportation accidents and the potentially disastrous effect which an accident involving high level radioactive waste would have upon a community. As we all know, accidents do happen. On May 31, 2001, as I was driving to work through Webster Groves, MO., a train derailed dumping the contents of thirteen coal cars. As I detoured along side streets, all I could think about was how lucky we were that the train had not been carrying hazardous or radioactive waste. I am enclosing a copy of the article which was written in our local newspaper, the Webster-Kirkwood Times about the accident.

Another of my concerns is the potential for an act of terrorism to be directed toward a shipment of highly radioactive waste, or if Yucca Mountain were to become a permanent storage facility that it would become a target. Though I have been informed that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission requires that armed escorts accompany shipments of irradiated fuel, this does not in the slightest assuage my concerns. In light of the recent national tragedy on September 11th in New York and Washington D.C., it's hard for me to imagine that in the event of an act of radiological sabotage that armed guards could be effective in any way.

I am also concerned about the training and licensing of the people who will be responsible for transporting the waste. Recently in the news there were reports of people who obtained their licenses through payoffs to irresponsible officials. I am appalled that the licensing or the transportation of such potentially lethal material could be in the hands of incompetent administrators and untrained drivers.

I am also concerned about the suitability of Yucca Mountain as a site which would be stable for the next 10,000 years since by law this highly radioactive waste is to be kept isolated from the environment for that length of time. Researchers have found that the mountain is crisscrossed by earthquake faults and that dormant volcanoes are located nearby. The movement of water through fractures in the rock which makes up mountain will in time percolate down to the waste storage areas and eventually the aquifer beneath it.

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I appreciate your time and consideration of my concerns. I hope and pray that the inappropriateness of shipping high level waste across the country to Yucca Mountain will be realized in time and that nuclear power itself will no longer be seen as a viable energy option.

Sincerely,



Kathy Lewis
120 Cornelia
St. Louis, MO 63122

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